

AT A GLANCE

Developing new products & services, driving market innovation (14th May 2024, in-person at JERICHO)

Please see below the session summary of notes from the May 2024 Social Economy FORUM meeting focused on 'Developing new products and services, and driving market innovation'.

OUR HOSTS | This session opportunity was collaboratively hosted by [Jericho](#) and [ChangeKitchen CIC](#) at 196-198 Edward Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 9LX.

INTRODUCTION

Social enterprises encounter several challenges as they strive to balance social impact, financial sustainability, and innovation.

Here are some common hurdles:

- 1. Financial Viability:** Social enterprises often operate in resource-constrained environments. Generating revenue while maintaining their social mission can be challenging. They need sustainable business models that don't compromise their impact.
- 2. Scaling Up:** Scaling social impact is complex. Balancing growth with maintaining quality services or products requires strategic planning. Access to capital, talent, and infrastructure can hinder expansion. While social enterprises are themselves innovative there is also a business imperative to develop new services and products requiring innovation in the business model.
- 3. Measuring Impact:** Demonstrating social outcomes is crucial. However, quantifying impact can be difficult. Social enterprises need robust metrics and evaluation methods to prove their effectiveness.
- 4. Awareness and Advocacy:** Many people still don't fully understand social enterprises. Advocacy efforts are essential to raise awareness, change perceptions, and create a supportive ecosystem.
- 5. Policy and Regulation:** Social enterprises operate within legal frameworks. Sometimes, regulations don't align with their hybrid nature (social and commercial). Advocating for favourable policies is essential.

Remember, addressing these challenges requires collaboration, innovation, and resilience. Social enterprises play a vital role in driving positive change, and overcoming obstacles is part of their journey.

SOCIAL INNOVATION

Within the social economy sector, we need to be clear about what we are trying to achieve through these impact driven businesses and we need to adopt the term **Social Innovation**.

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Social innovation* is *'a dynamic process of strategically developing and implementing inventive ideas, strategies or interventions aimed at proactively addressing social issues and instigating transformational change'*.

Social Innovation is complex and its approach requires an understanding the social, economic, and environmental environment that contribute to our many challenges in society. The connectivity is important to understand and to formulate long term social innovation which fosters inclusion and brings social outcomes.

To understand how social innovation is different from other innovations, it's helpful to understand its characteristics.

Characteristics of social innovation

Social impact

Collaboration and co-creation

Systems thinking

Innovative strategies

Empathy and user-centredness

Creativity and innovation

Scalability and replicability

Measurable outcomes

Empowerment and inclusion

There are many conversations within the social economy sector about innovation but the conversation gets stuck on the premise that social businesses need to adopt the same approaches of main stream businesses which concern the maximisation of profits rather than thinking about how its approach might impact on people, the environment, and the local economy.

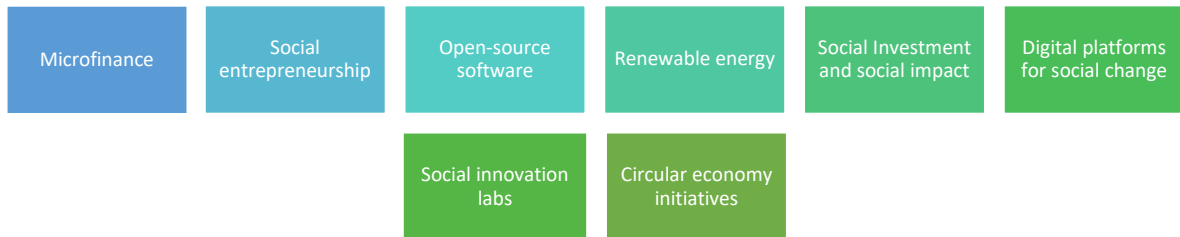
What is required is the active participation of marginalised communities and their involvement in the innovative process. There needs to be measurement at the core to understand outcomes and impact of the social innovation and the scalability of the innovation. Systems thinking is at its core where there is consideration of the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental factors and the identification of the root causes of the social issues.

*SOURCE: Nick Jain, Blog July 2023, [What is Social Innovation? Definition, Examples and Best Practices](#)

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Here are a few examples of social innovation which seek to create meaningful and ongoing social change.



SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP CASE STUDY: [Jericho](#)

'The Foundation helps people overcome barriers to employment. It provides work opportunities and support services as a stepping stone towards mainstream work.'

Social Problem

People can have difficulties accessing employment opportunities for a wide range of reasons. Some of the core groups the Jericho works with include people who are in substance misuse recovery programmes, who have recently come out of prison, who lack formal qualifications or experience, and victims of modern slavery.

Social Innovation Solution

To help people get a break within the job market, the charity operates a range of [social enterprises](#) through which it provides training, supported employment, work experience and apprenticeships. After a period of time within these supported programmes, it then helps clients transition into mainstream employment.

It is a charity and the family of seven social enterprises are:

[ChangeKitchen CIC](#), [cleaning](#), [construction](#), [workspace](#), [Miracle Laundry](#), [The ReUsers](#), and [The Wood Shack](#).

They aim to disrupt the likely trajectory of long-term unemployment and low aspiration and create a more level playing field from which to progress in work and in life.

BSSEC CIC would like to thank [Richard Beard](#) (CEO of Jericho) for the opportunity to hear all about their work at our May Social Economy FORUM and also [Birgit Kehrer](#) (Founder of ChangeKitchen CIC) for their collaboration in arranging this session. It's rare to get such an opportunity!